2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

622 Kalba. There was a lengthy dispute as to who should succeed to the sheikhdom, with the appearance of a wicked uncle who tried on several occasions to do away with his young nephew, who would legally succeed his father. The sheikh of Ras-al-Khaimah tried by various means to acquire the sheikhdom, but eventually the British Government stepped in and appointed the Sheikh of Sharjah's nephew as Regent. This wily Arab was not at all anxious for young Ali to ascend the throne when he came of age, and various devices had to be thought of to keep Ali out of harm's way.

At one time the British Resident in Bushire had the idea of sending him to the Princes' School in Persia, an academy run on English public school lines, to which the sons of the Indian princes were sent. It was considered that not only would such a step be prudent from a political point of view, but that it was advisable for the future ruler to have a sound education. Young Ali, however, would have none of this, and he ran away after the first term. At the time of our visit, he was under the protection of our host, the Sheikh of Sharjah. Handsome in a negro fashion, he was a sulky-looking youth and, I was confidentially informed, was already a past-master in the traditional desert intrigues.

144 827 173 Although the sheikhs of Oman are exceedingly proud of their descent, which in some cases extends to the sixteenth century and derives from some Saiyed, or descendant of the Prophet, there is a fair amount of intermarriage with the more beautiful of their slaves. Thus, even in the aristocratic Qasimi family, a powerful tribe which once ruled the greater part of Oman—and to which Sultan bin Saqr belongs—there are traces of negro blood. Oddly enough, the Arabs are not in the least ashamed of such admixtures. They believe that it gives them virility and strength, and there may be something to be said for the theory.

264 A lull had fallen upon the conversation, when one of the sheikh's sons approached his father and began to whisper in his ear. I imagine it had something to do with the preparation of the meal, for the sheikh rose from his chair and beckoned us to follow him to a long, narrow room on the other side of the courtyard. We passed through a fretted doorway and found ourselves in the salle à manger. The floor was liberally strewn with rugs and, on a damask cloth in the middle, there reposed about ten main and five secondary dishes of rice, curry, chipatties, dried fruits and vegetables. The principal dish, in front of which the sheikh seated himself,

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

race into round-headed or long-headed types, Alpine or Mediterranean. One can find a dolchycephalic head in any part of China and match it with a hundred heads in India, Arabia, France, Zululand or England.

My own theory, and it is as good as that advanced by Bertram Thomas or any other Arabian traveller, is that there is not one Arab race, but many Arab races. The inhabitant of Arabia may be termed an Arabian for geographical purposes, but ethnologically he may belong to the African race, the Persian or Iraqi race, or even the Turkestan race. Generally speaking, what is known as the true Arab is a Semite whose ancestors inhabited the Syrian and Palestinian deserts; some settled in Arabia proper, migrating as far south as the Gulf, whilst others trekked across Egypt and made their home as far west as the Atlas mountains, calling themselves Berbers and Senussi.

The tribes of Oman, Aden and the Hadramaut are undoubtedly of partial Semitic ancestry, but there is strong evidence in their black, curly hair, heavier noses, dark-brown eyes and negritic lips of African origins. Apart from the vast slave traffic which was a feature of Arab economic life up to the late nineteenth century, trading between the African coast and southern Arabia was at one time the main source of prosperity and enabled the sheikhs to build their towns, harbours and pearling fleets.

In the days of Arab power, the southern sheikhs ruled the seas from Bombay to Madagascar; Zanzibar was captured by the ancestors of the present ruler of Muscat, and the sultan who rules Zanzibar to-day is a descendant of the same Saiyed family. It is evident that with this close connexion between southern Arabia and East Africa, which continued uninterrupted for many centuries, a widespread inflow of negro blood must have occurred. Arabs intermarried with their slaves, African merchants married Arab women, and only the upper and princely classes, as well as the nomadic desert tribes who did no trading, were able to preserve their Semitic purity of race. It is also quite probable that some of the aboriginal tribes or earliest settlers of Oman and the Hadramaut originally came over from the African continent.

The Arabs, like many other races priding themselves on their breeding are, in reality, by no means pure-bred; but in their case their racial pride and extraordinary tenacity of tradition has enabled them to escape the usual effects of a dilution of the national stock.

The pure-blooded Bedouin, the gypsy of the desert, whom

361 coco-nut trees grow down to the shore on either side of the creek, on the southern side of which is a palm-mat 'summer palace' belonging to the Sheikh of Ras-al-Khaimah, now used to house a discarded wife. The town is divided by the creek into two sections—Dubai proper, where the merchants and wealthier classes live, and Dera, the fishermen's quarter. We made for the latter and moored alongside a primitive wooden jetty beside which large pearling dhows were undergoing a careen.

342 The streets of Dera are filthy in the extreme, the inhabitants living in hovels roofed with palm-matting supported by wooden joists. The only presentable house was the coral and mortar residence of Ali, the Anglo-Persian Company's agent in Dubai; we stopped here for a few minutes and had a cup of tea made with 438 condensed milk. The Arabs, whose chief occupation is pearl 164 diving, fishing, shipbuilding and wool-weaving, were ragged and unkempt; many had sores on their legs and arms, and appeared to be suffering from eye infections. Many of the children were 364 badly pock-marked. The stench of refuse, stale fish, camel dung and rotting food was unbearable, and attracted clouds of flies.

144 One noticed a variety of racial types. The Omani Arabs predominated, but one saw also fair-skinned Persians, Bedouins, Sunussi, and negroid types who were obviously ex-slaves. Many of the Arabs, thin-bearded men with hawk-like noses, looked more 443 villainous than any I have seen. We strolled through the bazaar, but the shops were small and untidy and displayed goods of inferior quality. In several of the shops I noticed ancient iron safes, gaudily painted, which were of English manufacture and had obviously 159 been taken from merchantmen by the pirates. There is little doubt that most of the inhabitants of Dera, a vicious, sullen crowd, would gladly have returned to piracy had they been given half a chance.

142 In contrast to their cruel, sardonic faces around us, I was struck by the beauty of some of the children who swarmed at our side, feeling our clothes and touching our hands. A little girl of nine or ten attracted my attention; her perfectly formed features, luminous brown eyes and Grecian lips made me sigh for a pencil and sketchbook. The little boys were delightful creatures too, with laughing eyes and white, even teeth.

363 The streets were extremely dark, with high walls on one side and palm-matting completely covering them like a roof, whilst 443 the 'road' was a quagmire of mud and camel dung. Six shops out of every ten exhibited panniers of dried fruits and cereals, figs,

S: Cadral G-3 (1948-1950) 1950 MK1 Oman
Trucial Oman MK4
Bedouin MJ4

000 Arab World, is made ghastly by this local scarcity of water, and they can be seen watching, and sometimes licking, the gloss which is the only indication of a slight trickle from a hole in the side of a house. At other times they try to keep cool by lying at the edge of the sea, until their thirst proves too great, and they take their last drink.

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Slavery still Exists

The population is predominantly Arab, but Persians, Baluchis, Somalis and Negroes make up a considerable section of the coast-dwellers. Many of the latter are slaves, and in this polyglot society, practising polygamy and concubinage, the Arab's blood is seldom free from non-Arab strains. Although the importation of slaves from Africa and Persia is officially said to have been abolished, there is no reason to suppose that this form of trading has ceased entirely; for Britain no longer exercises her right to search vessels, and the chances of any law-breaker getting caught are very small. In addition, children are still abducted from their villages by bedouin raiders, and are sold in the market at Biraimi, the neutral region in the desert about one hundred miles to the

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133 offshore. The interior country in the north is hilly, with an average elevation of about 500 feet, but toward the southwest it becomes progressively flatter and more desolate. The portion from Abu Dhabi to Khor al Odaid is barren and virtually uninhabited.

132 The climate is particularly trying in the summer months from May to October, when temperatures of 115° F. and humidity readings of 90 to 98 per cent are frequently recorded. In contrast, the days from November to February are agreeably cool, while the nights often are cold. The rainfall is irregular, and normally approximates 4 to 5 inches a year. It is usually concentrated in sudden and violent storms during the mid-winter months.

POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

161 162 The population of Trucial Oman is not accurately known, but in 1951 it was estimated at about 80,000, including Bedouin 144 tribes totaling possibly 8,000. The settled inhabitants are of mixed racial stock. They are predominantly Arabs, but Negro admixtures, descendants of former slaves from Africa, and communities of Baluchis, Iranians 795 and Indians are prominent. Except for a few Hindus, the majority are Moslems. Most of the Arabs belong to the Wahhabi branch of the Sunni sect of Islam.

468 228 The chief occupations of the people are pearl diving, fishing, shipbuilding and date cultivation. Some of the best pearling reefs in the Persian Gulf are found off the Trucial Coast, and Dibai long has been recognized as the center of activity in the southern Gulf region. The industry has declined within recent years, but, in more favorable times, thousands of pearling vessels are said to have put out from Trucial Oman ports each season from early summer to November.

241 Agriculture is of secondary importance, being confined to areas in which water is available for irrigation. Date groves exist along the coast as far west as Abu Dhabi, and small amounts of millet, wheat, tobacco